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ETHICAL MONISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

B. A. G. FULLER

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

A favourite argument of the neo-Hegelian apologists for the appearance of evil in a perfect world is the contention that without evil good could not exist. By this we are to understand, not that evil is a *sine qua non* of the existence of the good, unavoidably incidental to its production and maintenance, but rather, indeed, that it is an indispensable factor in the very essence of perfection and positively contributive to its value. Unaltered in accidents yet changed in substance, it is, as it were, transubstantiated by an eternal act of consecration in the mind and purpose of God. That we neither perceive nor comprehend the miracle is due to our human limitations. Could we see things as God sees them, "under the aspect of eternity," we should then understand how what we call sin and suffering and defeat and shame have their place in the economy of the whole, and provide, along with the other oppositions and conflicts in the world, the indispensable condition of that victorious battle with obstacles and limitations and that triumphant resolution of contradictories in higher syntheses in which the life and happiness of the absolute consists. So, though our partial and superficial experiences do not enjoy the triumph (and indeed cannot, since were we conquerors or indifferent to defeat there would be no evil to transcend), we may yet have faith that in our deepest and total self the victory has been won and peace attained. Thus God's ways are justified to man; and though the world is apparently full of evil, we are still entitled to believe it really good, and are able intelligently to account for and defend our belief.

If we divest this theory of its rhetoric, its weight stripped is that the imperfection of the part is consonant with the perfection of the whole. This is the real thesis which underlies the various fashions of the argument. Its distinctions between the partial

and the complete points of view, its invocations of analogies drawn from aesthetic experience, its appeals to the verities of the moral life, all do but seek in different ways to make credible and inspiring this cold and homely proposition.

The design of the present article is to sketch in bare outline an *exposé* of this attempt. Such a sketch must necessarily be disjointed, for it has not only to show up the thesis itself, questioning the validity of the proposition *a priori*, but also to follow it in its appeal to concrete experience, pointing out the confusions of which it is guilty and the inappropriateness of the analogies upon which it relies. Of necessity, then, we shall be forced to string the points which we wish to make somewhat loosely upon the thread of argument.

Let us join issue then at once. Our first step may well be to clear the ground and expose the main position by making once and for all the distinction between moral and natural perfection. It is all the more important to do so, inasmuch as the crucial difficulty with the absolutist's position seems to lie in his inability not to confuse them.

It must be obvious that the moral imperfection of any or of all the parts in no wise contradicts the natural perfection of the whole. Natural perfection is synonymous with explained systematic existence; and the explicability of things has nothing to do with their moral values, in the narrower sense of the term. We are as able to find sufficient reason in the constitution of mechanical nature for what we call evil as for what we call good. The causes of sin and suffering as well as of virtue and happiness can be traced, and both will be found equally congruous with its systematic character, equally intelligible, and hence, metaphorically speaking, equally good from its point of view. It is one of the axioms of the scientific method and interest that whatever is, is right.

So far then as the absolutist is a naturalist and imputes merely a mechanical perfection to reality, we have no quarrel with him. But he is not usually so discreet. He insists upon attributing to reality a perfection in which not merely our passion for truth but our passions for goodness and beauty find, did we but know it, their absolute satisfaction.

This, on the face of it, is a different proposition. The ethical ideal is determined by other purposes beside the scientific. In the world of moral values things are not justified by their existence, nor do they find sufficient reason in their natural causes. The moral interest in them is not satisfied by showing their place and necessity in the natural order. They are good only if room can be found for them in an ideal reconstruction of the natural order determined not only by logical but by aesthetic and moral considerations. I do not mean, be it noted, that this ideally reconstructed world would not be mechanical. On the contrary, there is no *a priori* reason why a perfect life should not flourish in a mechanical order. As it is, such a view of nature seems best to satisfy the logical and scientific interest in understanding the world. And it would answer to the moral demand also, provided only the mechanism were such as not to subvert our other interests, but to furnish us rather, as it did the Epicurean gods, with the means of happy self-realization:

Omnia suppeditat porro Natura, neque ulla
Res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo.

But, to revert from this digression concerning the mechanical hypothesis, it is certainly difficult to understand, at any rate on the level of abstract reasoning, how any whole can be morally perfect if any of its parts be morally imperfect. For the moral value of the part would seem necessarily to be estimated by its congruity with the total moral order, just as its natural value is determined by its explicability by the natural order in question. Its inexplicable or chance character means its inability to find place and ground in the conceived total system; its imperfect character, its unfitness for inclusion within a perfectly satisfactory whole. To say then that the world may be perfect in spite of the imperfection of its parts, is on a par with saying that it may be completely intelligible notwithstanding an absence of sufficient reason in its constituents. And any demonstration that a morally imperfect fact can belong to a system of facts in its entirety morally satisfactory and perfect will implicitly justify the conclusion that an incomprehensible event can be part of a perfectly comprehensible universe.

At this point, however, the absolutist is likely to take his cue for an impressive entrance. We have given him, he will say, just the opening he was looking for. The part taken by itself may seem chance and unintelligible. It becomes intelligible only when seen in its relations to the total series and system. Taken by itself, also, it may seem imperfect and evil. It becomes good only when seen in its relations to the whole. The origin of evil lies just in the partial and finite point of view.

The correctness of this resolution of evil into partial and fragmentary vision we might sharply challenge, if we chose. It involves a reduction of physical and moral evil to metaphysical evil which is quite unwarranted except in a thorough-going mysticism, and it exemplifies admirably the confusion of moral with natural perfection. But, as the situation is in no wise altered by the contention, it is scarcely worth while to raise the point.

For the absolutist has not solved the problem of evil; he has merely restated it. Grant his contention that evil is a matter of appearance and partiality, and that it is transcended and transmuted to good from the point of view of the whole, the question still remains, how account on his own premises for the existence of the appearance and of the error which it involves? If the world be really perfect, how can it be the basis of any point of view which finds it imperfect? The illusion, at least, of sin and suffering is real enough. The consistent naturalist can perhaps deal with it by saying that the illusion is simply one fact among others. That we make moral distinctions, that we find the world imperfect or irrational, is just one expression, on a par with all other facts, of the nature of things. But if the whole be conceived as possessing a value consonant with our ideal of moral perfection, as responsive, that is, to the demand not only for logical consistency, but for absence of pain and sin as well, the existence of the illusion becomes inexplicable. For the illusion is an evil. Error would be, then, *a priori* impossible in a perfect world. The perfect reality which the absolute is could not account for the imperfection of its appearance in the eyes of what is a part of itself; nor is it comprehensible how the opinion that things are irrational and unsatisfactory should contribute to their real rationality and satisfactoriness. If, to paraphrase Bishop But-

ler, this were a perfect world, it could not be imperfectly comprehended.

The absolutist, however, is ready with his reply. We have not understood him. We have argued on the assumption that good and evil, perfection and imperfection, are contradictory and reciprocally exclusive. But it is this which he denies. It is not contrary to the law of contradiction that evil should be at the same time evil and not evil. A thing may be painful, and yet we may like it; an obstacle, and yet we may enjoy overcoming it. Witness the thrill of pleasure in titillating a sensitive tooth with one's tongue, or the proverbial New England enjoyment of ill-health. And, that his examples may not be wholly pathological, he formulates an elaborate appeal to normal aesthetic and moral experience and to psychology which it now becomes our task to examine and criticize.

We have first to note an invocation of the aesthetic analogy in general. Evil in the world is like the villain in the play, the harsh note or chord in the harmony, or the shadows in the picture. As these, by reason of their very mean, discordant, or dark character, are not only indispensable to bringing out the full value of their opposites but actually enhance the worth of the whole composition, so evil, by virtue of its vicious and evil character, sets off the good and improves the universe.

This is, however, a singularly incorrect and confused translation of ethical into aesthetic terms. Whether or no aesthetic and moral values, regarded in their proper spheres and as expressive of different interests, need coincide, it is plain that if we are to speak analogically of the one in terms of the other the aesthetically good must correspond to the morally good, the aesthetically evil to the morally evil. Only by such a deliberate and exact translation of the one by the other, forced though it may be, is it possible to use the simile at all, and to describe or practise life as a fine art and have it still a moral life.

It is manifestly improper, then, in the example given above to liken moral evil to villain or discord or shadow. For from the point of view of the artist these are in themselves a neutral subject-matter, capable of being made elements in either beauty or in ugliness according as they are well or ill treated. Moral

evil should rather correspond to the unconvincing conception or presentation of the villain, or the inappropriate introduction of the discord, or the wrong painting of the shadow. But in that case the analogy proves a *reductio ad absurdum* of what it is invoked to demonstrate. To say that the world is better for the evil in it, turns out to be like saying that the play is more artistic for being inartistically written, the symphony finer for being ill-composed, the picture greater for being indifferently painted.

But the absolutist will put this aside as a mere sophism: the point is, he will insist, that here we have an example of how a thing regarded in itself may seem evil, but in relation to a larger content, good. We may concede this without hesitation. Just as the moral imperfection of the parts was consonant with the mechanical, so it might be with the aesthetic perfection of the whole. Instead of regarding nature as a mere machine, indifferent to good and evil, we might regard her as an artist equally gratified in both. Appreciative audience of her own actions, she might applaud the dramatic propriety of all, finding the villain as necessary to the value of her play as the hero, and prizing him accordingly. But granted all this, it throws no more light on the problem of reconciling moral evil to a moral absolute than did the congruity of sin and suffering with the mechanical perfection of the physical order. Indeed, to resolve the opposition between good and evil into a harmonious difference of complementary artistic effects is merely to drape naturalism rather diaphanously with the pathetic fallacy. The world that admires all its parts as equally appropriate to its aesthetic perfections possesses the same ethical significance as that in which all are regarded as equally necessary and characteristic features in the operation of its mechanism. To neither world are moral values applicable or relevant.

The analogy, then, from aesthetic, as that from natural perfection, may be dismissed, so far as the argument is concerned. In the one case as in the other, any apparent pertinence rests upon an ambiguity in the use of the term "good" or "perfect"; and wherever the figure is correctly and strictly developed, it discredits the point it is employed to illustrate. It is in moral

experience alone, then, whence all possibility of equivocation has been excluded, that we can find, if anywhere, the justification of the absolutist's contention. And here it is that we are confronted immediately with a number of facts which, as it seems to him, irrefutably bear out his position. The very pleasurable-ness of pleasure, he points out, depends upon an antithesis of pain. There can be no satisfaction without a preparation of dissatisfaction; no sense of beauty except in opposition to ugliness; no virtue which is really virtuous without vicious tendencies; no merit without temptation and struggle. And, finally, there is the supreme fact that we enjoy the struggle; that we take pleasure in pain and labour; that peace is only peace if it be wrung from conflict.

It is evident that it is only with this last argument that we need really deal if we so choose. For, granting the interdependence of contraries which is the gist of the first series of contentions, we may well ask whether here again we have anything more than another restatement of the problem of evil. To say that there can be no pleasure without pain, beauty without ugliness, good conduct without vicious propensities, or perfect activity except in overcoming obstacles, is not necessarily to show how imperfection may be transubstantiated into perfection, but might be taken as merely an emphatic demonstration that the world is imperfectly constituted.

The pessimist will say frankly that such a world is not worth what it costs. The majority of men, while willing to pay what they do for it, are responsive to Leonardo's cry, "O God, that sellest us goods at a price of great weariness." They would beat the world down if they could. To naïve common sense, at least, it seems as if it were just this fact that everything had to be bargained for and nothing valuable was free in which, from the point of view of morals, the imperfection of nature consisted. In a perfect nature the good would be free as air, and all activities would be naturally directed through happy performance to happy results.

Still, these statements of the interdependence of contraries are not only irrelevant but specious in themselves; and, if only in the interest of a pleasanter view of life, it will be well for us to

stop a moment and try to dispose of them. The first point, the interdependence of pleasure and pain and of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, seems capable of an obvious *reductio ad absurdum*. If they be not independent feelings, and can only be expressed in reference to one another, it is pertinent to query how they could enter experience at all. For neither can exist prior to the other, yet one must come first.

Moreover this linkage is not borne out by introspection. There are mixed pleasures, indeed, but there are quite as obviously pure pleasures, even on the physical plane. The comfort of a good digestion, for example, is neither constituted nor enhanced by the memories of indigestion. Nor is it necessary to suffer intermittently with melancholia to enjoy living.

To the pure pleasures, again, all the aesthetic and intellectual pleasures would seem to belong. There is nothing in experience to corroborate the statement that beauty is beauty only in contrast to what is not beautiful. One does not have to know the worst in order to enjoy the best in art. The musical chord is not more pleasing because one has heard discords, the painting more delightful because one has seen chromolithographs. Nor is the idea which suddenly flashes upon one a whit less thrilling than that which is painfully precipitated by a racking brain.

We have then discovered a large class of goods neither the existence nor the essence of which is in any way conditioned or constituted by the presence of evil. The aesthetic, the intellectual, and many physical satisfactions may be quite unconscious of any conquest over any antagonist, and may be revealed by a kind of grace which exacts nothing in return. To state, then, that the value of all perfection is to be estimated in direct proportion to the price paid for it is too hasty and sweeping. And to ask whether the value of any perfection is properly so to be appraised becomes now our task. Hence we turn to examine the last stronghold of the absolutist, the case of moral excellence.

Here the *prima facie* evidence is against us. It cannot be denied that the value of virtue seems to depend upon the existence of vice and to be enhanced by it. If there were no moral evil, there could be no moral good. For virtue consists in conquering

vice; merit is the fruit of struggle; character is made by temptation and suffering.

But cross-examination reveals that we are not really confronted with a good which gets its essential goodness from wrestling with its contrary. The "moral character" of a good turns out upon inquiry to mean no new kind of good, but rather to express an accidental and undesirable relation in which the sovereign good stands to the will. It signifies that the good is unattained and insecure. It presents it as something to be wrung from the midst of adverse conditions, and consecrates the pursuit of it as imperative. Virtue, in a word, is remedial. Could it attain its end and eradicate vice, it would, it is true, itself cease. But in losing its life it would have found it. Activities would have become easy which before were laboured, conduct natural which before was artificial. In such a transfiguration, surely nothing valuable would have been lost. We should be at last in undisputed possession of that the value of attaining which alone made virtue worth while, or indeed differentiated it as such from other behaviour. Virtue then might well take leave of us in the words of Virgil's parting with Dante:

Non aspettar mio dir più, nè mio cenno.
 Libero, dritto e sano è lo tuo arbitrio,
 E fallo fora non fare a suo senno;
 Per ch' io te sopra te corono e mitrio.

The case of merit is even more striking. As a matter of fact we do become perfect through temptation and suffering. This is what the moral life means. But are we entitled to conclude that because we are better *post hoc*, we are therefore better *propter hoc*? Is not merit based upon the state actually attained, and not upon the struggle by which we have attained it?

It is certainly difficult to disassociate merit from its antecedents, and to distinguish the extrinsic conditions under which it is displayed from its intrinsic value. Yet this failure to discriminate between means and ends, and a consequent inversion of their relations, is of great mischief to philosophic thought. There can be no merit without temptation. Granted. It is but a special instance of the interdependence of virtue and vice. But in the

instance, as in general, the value is prospective, not retrospective. We merit, not because we have merely conquered temptation, but because the victory has brought us nearer the ideal. It is from the fruits, not the fact, of victory that our merit comes. An indiscriminate slaughter of desires for the mere sake of seeing the blood run has nothing noble or meritorious about it. Yet did merit and character depend upon the overcoming and not upon the nature of the adversary, the man who fought all right desire down would be as perfected through suffering as he who suppressed all wrong; and if he had the harder time and stubborn contest in his task, even more so. Sound comment upon this view is the rebellious proposition of one of the many philosophic *enfants terribles* cradled by the University of Paris in the fourteenth century: "That God can order a rational creature to hate him, and it in obeying him acquires more merit than if it loved him at his command, *quoniam hoc faceret majori conatu et contra propriam inclinationem.*"

It is as noble, however, to be conquered by good inclinations as to conquer bad ones. The fight is worth fighting only if and because it advances us toward the ideal. We may, to be sure, enjoy the fight for its own sake, but the pleasure can be adjudged good only if the cause be worthy.

In fine, are we not dealing again with the old confusion of natural with moral perfection, instanced here in a failure to distinguish between the strength and the moral direction of the will? There is, it is assumed, a kind of moral excellence in mere withstanding; and the character which is confirmed in power through such overcoming is intrinsically better than that which is spontaneously right. But on what possible moral ground is so-called strength of character admirable save as a means to moral rectitude? Given an imperfect will, in which the habit of right action is not innate but has to be acquired, and merit depends upon struggle, since perfection is attained through struggle. Given a perfect will, naturally endowed with rectitude, not beset with temptations, and unhindered by obstacles, exercising itself in a wholly favourable world, and with the temptation and the struggle all merit if you like, as all virtue, will have disappeared. But all that made the struggle with temptation and adversity meritorious, and made

the temptation and the suffering themselves valuable discipline, will remain. The disposition to right action and an environment wholly gracious and responsive to it, which it is the aim and justification of the moral life to foster and establish, will still, or rather will at length, exist. Only, man will come naturally by that to the acquirement of which moral action is a necessary means in an imperfect world, and by its subservience to which its moral goodness is alone defined.

Again, the intrinsic value of the means is not altered by their necessity as conditions of acquiring the good. That evil is indispensable to the attainment of the good, or brings forth good in the end, does not make it any the less evil. The necessity, for example, or the prospective success of an operation, are not anaesthetics. Nay more, however necessary and however successful the operation may have been, the medical record of the patient is the worse for having had to undergo it. In like manner one may be made perfect through sin and suffering, but one's history as a whole is the less clean and satisfactory for their incidence. Else why repent of the sins through which one has found grace, or talk of the "sufferings" which have ministered to one's restoration to health, or, for that matter, if one be truly philosophic, even of a "restoration." And however happy the eventual dénouement of the world-process may be, that process, seen "under the aspect of eternity," cannot but be marred by the pain and wrong through which its salvation has been worked out. It is the old Aristotelian opposition between the οὐ ἔνεκα and the οὐ οὐκ ἀνευ with which we are dealing. But Aristotle was not blind to their true relations. He saw quite clearly that if evil be necessary to the existence of the good, then the good is rendered incomplete and the world imperfect by the very conditions which render them possible.

If it be not true that in losing their lives virtue and merit shall find them again in the spontaneous perfection of a new heaven and a new earth, the whole moral life is stultified. For it aims at nothing less than the elimination of evil altogether, and hence at suicide. And if evil be an element in the good, beyond this death there is no happy immortality. The end of moral action becomes the extinction of all that makes it valuable, each

partial conquest is but an advance towards ultimate defeat, each so-called betterment of the world no more than a blow at the foundation of its goodness. Thus the sustaining vision of our lives is an Agamemnon's dream, luring us to catastrophe under the guise of victory; or, to change the figure, we think that in overcoming evil we are soaring upwards, when we are really only cutting from beneath us the ground on which we stand.

It is no question here of whether or not the ideal be attainable. That is irrelevant to our argument. To pursue an unattainable ideal may be natural and noble, provided only that in its attainment our nature would find its perfection and peace. The point at issue is far graver. It is not that to pursue the ideal is criticized as vain, but that to have an ideal at all is implied to be irrational. For to desire that the attainment of which would involve the annihilation of all that makes it desirable is madness. Yet, if our opponent be right, it is just this which we naturally desire, and in proportion as our will becomes moral and our aspirations rational, consciously worship and pursue.

It is not surprising, however, that the confusion of means with ends, or of medicine with food—the figure may be infinitely varied—should take place. We live not in a perfect but an imperfect world, and we incorporate the ideal with our lives only by a long process of struggle with and triumph over obstacles. The good we find is worth the labour of producing it. In this wise the means gain a fictitious glamour from their relation to the end. Concomitants and conditions of realizing the good, they come to be regarded as contributive not only to its existence but to its character. We fancy that because we are better because of the struggle in one sense, we are better because of it in the other; that is, that since we become better *by means of* the struggle, we are better for having had to go through with it. By persistently making the best, then, of the exigencies forced upon us by imperfection, judging them as we do in the light of their results and their uses rather than of their intrinsic values, we are the more predisposed to agree to the philosopher's assertion that they are positive elements of perfection, especially if his appeal be adorned with solemn and religious imagery. Nay, we are ready to yield a sentimental acquiescence when he con-

justifies us to invert the relation between means and ends altogether; to believe the end to be valuable merely as a stimulus to the struggle for it, and to conceive the good to be good only in so far as it is not attained.

The absolutist, however, will stand manfully by his position. It is we, he persists, who are inverting the relation between means and end, not he. The true end is in truth the wrestle with obstacles, the sweat, the panting, the resistance, the joy in it all. No other pleasure is so sweet, no other so noble. To the battle the vision of victory is but an incentive. The good lies in the battle itself. The palm withers as soon as it is won.

The psychology upon which this argument rests is sound enough as far as it goes. There can be no doubt that we enjoy activity for activity's sake. We like not only what the struggle brings us but the feel of the struggle as well. Indeed we often enjoy the game more than its prize. Upon this fact, too—upon the enjoyment, as it were, of making money for the pleasure of business—rests largely the plausibility of the method we were discussing in the last paragraph of estimating the value of existence by its expensiveness.

But we may raise a doubt at once as to the pertinence of this experience to the question in hand. In the first place one might turn against the absolutist his own objection to our insistence upon the painful elements involved in some struggle. We might remind him that, given his premises, he has no more right to hail as a real good the joy in the conflict or the triumph than have we to stigmatize suffering and failure as real evil. He denies the real or ultimate character of evil on the same grounds that we might deny the real or ultimate character of what he makes a good. The evil in the struggle, he tells us, is not ultimately evil, because it is overcome in the absolute life. Its real value, then, depends upon the end it subserves. And, as we have already pointed out, there is no other reason for considering the joy in the struggle a real or ultimate good. On the other hand, if it be admitted that the joy of a successful tussle be a suitable characteristic of absolute perfection, it would seem as if the absolutist were in reason bound to grant in return that what pain or seeming defeat may be involved therein is as real, as ultimate, and as

absolute. In last resort the relativity of the two values or their absoluteness should stand or fall together.

The vital objection to the argument, however, challenges not so much the premises or the experience upon which it rests as the correctness of the inference or interpretation it makes. We may acknowledge gladly the suitability of the pleasure in work and struggle to a perfected life. We have no more desire than the absolutist to sit down forever in Spencer's "lady-like, tea-table Elysium." A perfected world does not mean a world in which there is nothing more to do; it means only a world in which we always enjoy our work. But it would seem impossible to find any antithesis of good and evil in such work, however hard. In the labour we delight in there is no pain to physis, so far as we truly delight in it and find it an unalloyed good. It is at this point that the absolutist's interpretation seems faulty. He appears to forget that the most breathless struggle, at the moment when it becomes an end in itself, becomes as pure an *ἐνέργεια ἀκίνησις* as the most silent contemplation. To keep pace with the wind is to float ever in halcyon calm. In that tempestuous activity, that glorious strain and stress, that jubilant hurling of obstacles to one side, there is no experience of evil whatsoever. The difficulties which we enjoy overcoming are not enemies but friends. In our wrestle with them there is no misfortune, no mutilation of our purpose, no thwarting of our will. It is a sport; not the painful pursuit of a good, but the possession and enjoyment of it. Such activity is quite different from the grim life and death struggle with evil. There the enemy is no welcome adversary but a hated foe. We do not want him; we want rather to be rid of him. He is not the necessary condition of pleasurable exercise, but must be chased from the field before the sport can really begin. What distinguishes the moral life from a truly free and perfected activity is just the fact that the obstacles it involves are hindrances, not helps, to happy self-expression; that its struggles we do not enjoy; and that its victories are won at a cost of self-curtailment and sacrifice of possible good. No sleight of hand can juggle it into the semblance of a sport nor philosophic incantation civilize the devil into a friendly opponent in an exciting and delightful game.

But it is into such a friendly and welcome adversary that the devil is necessarily reformed in the absolute experience. For were there any contest with evil *qua* evil, the absolute would not be perfect. His experience would have in it something, we must insist, which he had rather have out. However, if evil be merely the welcome obstacle, necessary condition of sport and victory, it is hard to see how he can have any moral value for us. We are butchered to make his holiday. That his experience includes and feels directly our sufferings is no sanctification either of it or of them. On the contrary, if he share the pains he inflicts and enjoys, his life is beyond the pale not only of the moral but of the sane.

In any case, moreover, we have no access to his perfected experience, no share in his victory, no thrill of his joy. Nay, we cannot hope to know and share them; for were we happy, there would be no suffering for him to transcend, and hence no victory and no felicity. It is this last fact which adds insult to the injury already done the moral ideal. Were he merely himself untroubled by what troubles us, or unruffled even, and without compunction at the sight of our unhappiness, we might deal with him as we deal with a mechanical world. The moral life would not be forced indeed to violent and tropical growth, but neither would it be dulled and blighted. As he is, however, human aspiration must move ever in the shadow. For as he is, the only thing that could trouble him would be that we should be untroubled. Nothing whatever could mar his happiness save our own.

We are forced then to disallow this supreme appeal of the absolutist to the moral life as no more convincing than his invocation of the aesthetic interests. Not only does inspection of ethical experience fail to assist us toward the desired solution of the problem, but it invalidates, as we have seen, the conclusions it is employed to support. We cannot find there, more than in aesthetics and psychology, any justification for that paradoxical snobbishness which refuses to bow to the good unless it have evil relatives or forbears. On the contrary, in the light of ethics also this attitude is seen to be due not to a keen eye for worth and dignity, but rather to an incomplete, if not mistaken,

knowledge of who's who. Not only are there some goods which are pure of any base admixture, but it is these which set the type and standard for all goods so far as they have been able to live down their pasts and lose all trace of their origins. Evil then appears as something which, by definition, refuses amalgamation with or inclusion in the good. And in no experience fulfilling our demand for moral perfection can we find any place for it at all; nor in any possessing even a sympathetic moral meaning can we conceive it as appearing as other than a defect. We must conclude that if the absolute is to be one in value, and yet to include within himself all distinctions of value, he can be and do so only by turning these distinctions into mere differences of equally valuable, and therefore, so far as we are concerned, equally valueless facts. In fine, a monistic view of the world cannot give any cosmic significance or metaphysical import to the moral life. The only possible monism is naturalistic; the only possible pantheism a moral indifferentism.

The significance of this conclusion for metaphysics in general must be clear. If it be valid, it must eliminate once and for all the ethical monist variety of absolutism from the list of possible systems. Thought indeed would seem to be restricted to one of two directions. It must choose in last resort between, on the one hand, an explicitly—or at any rate an implicitly—naturalistic interpretation of reality, which, though it deprives the moral life of cosmic sympathy and superhuman meaning, yet leaves the interests and ideals upon which it rests vital and convincing so far as human life is concerned; and, on the other, a pluralism which, though it may supply metaphysical justification to our preferences and divine encouragement to our aspirations, still disrupts beyond hope of philosophic repair the single-heartedness of the world.